



Washington State
Board of Education



Meeting Highlights

January 29, 2007

On January 25th and 26th, the State Board of Education met in Lacey to tackle its two major projects for the year: examining a meaningful high school diploma and building an accountability performance system.

Board Action on Education Standards

The Board took action on two critical items (click to view the full resolution or charge):

- [Adoption of a resolution to reaffirm its strong support for linking robust standards and the Washington Assessment of Student Learning \(WASL\) to competitive high school graduation requirements.](#)
- [Adoption of a charge to begin an independent review of Washington's current K-12 mathematics standards using national consultants who have experience in reviewing state mathematics standards.](#)

Public Hearing: Strengthening High School Mathematics and Other Required Credits

The Board feels it is necessary to clarify the rules for high school credits needed for high school graduation. A public hearing was held on January 25 about the proposed rule changes. The Board will adopt final rule changes at its March meeting to ensure the credits high school students earn for graduation are aligned with the content in the ninth and tenth grade, Grade Level Expectations (GLEs).

Meaningful High School Diploma

The Board began its review of what kind of high school diploma students need to be ready for work, college and citizenship in the 21st century. A Board committee, chaired by Eric Liu, will meet monthly on this topic and work with a group of advisors to develop a report with recommendations by December 2007.

The Board heard from three high school principals from the Vancouver, Bellevue and Rainier School Districts. The principals felt strongly that the state's high school graduation credits must align with the state standards for students to be successful, and that professional development for teachers to enhance meaningful instruction is key.

The state requires a minimum of 19 credits for high school graduation; this has remained the same for the last 20 years. The numbers of credits in core subject areas required by Washington State are lower than the median credits required in other states.

Median Number of Credits for a Standard High School Diploma

	Mathematics	English	Social Studies	Science
Median Credits for 43 States	3	4	3	3
Washington	2	3	2.5	2

Source: Education Commission on the States as of August 2006

Some of the key issues the committee and Board will examine include:

- What are the knowledge and skills students must have for college and work?
- Should Washington provide a variety of diplomas?
- Should the Board adopt more flexible requirements for students to choose credits from more than one area (e.g. arts or a foreign language)?

Board members encouraged the committee to look at methods by which a student may obtain credit and not to just add more credits without looking at the type of credit and how it fits into the overall picture of what students need.

Data Systems

The Board examined what data are currently available for improving student achievement. Lead researchers from the Joint Legislative Audit & Review Committee (JLARC) presented findings from their K-12 Data Study. The study identified critical expenditures, student, teacher, school, and community data on what is currently available and what is missing.

Joe Egan, Chief Information Officer for the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), reported on the progress made on the statewide student longitudinal data project.

Dr. Marge Plecki, Associate Professor at the University of Washington, reported on studies she has conducted on Washington's teachers. She also provided a view on how we can improve our state's capacity for teacher data.

Dr. Lin Douglas, Interim Executive Director of the Professional Educators Standards Board (PESB), reiterated the need for a state data system that can provide an accurate picture of the educator workforce. Currently, comprehensive data is not available for informing policymakers on aspects such as the quality of the workforce or the supply and demand for teachers in different subject areas.

The Board was also introduced to the national Data Quality Campaign as a resource for states as they work towards establishing quality longitudinal data systems.

Accountability Performance System

The Board gives top priority to obtaining the data needed to focus on improving student achievement and finding ways to work with schools that do not meet performance goals. A Board committee, chaired by Dr. Kris Mayer, has started monthly meetings on the accountability performance system and will work with a group of advisors. The committee plans to have recommendations for the first phase of an accountability system by December 2007.

Currently, the greatest accountability for performance rests on the backs of students, not the K-12 system. There are no mandatory state interventions to strengthen school management systems (except to withhold funds). The state-funded focused assistance program is available only for Title I schools (those with 40 percent students on free and reduced lunch) that volunteer to get help.

Some of the key issues in the first phase of work for the committee and Board are:

- Examine the data needed to focus on improving student achievement.
- Create an annual State Board of Education report card to identify which schools perform well and which do not.
- Create a mandate for schools that do not meet performance goals within two years to engage in improvement efforts.

Board members discussed the need to build capacity at a scale to help the large number of districts and schools that need assistance.

School Improvement Process Briefing

The Board heard presentations from Janell Newman, Assistant Superintendent for District/School Improvement & Accountability and her staff from OSPI, on opportunity gaps that can impact achievement gaps. They reported on this year's amendments to Washington's Accountability Workbook required by the U.S. Department of Education. The 2006–07 school year is the first time all grades 3–8 and 10 will be required to meet NCLB's Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) targets.

This increase in the number of grades may increase the likelihood of schools not meeting AYP. That possibility brings into question whether the state has the resources needed to assist schools that do not meet AYP.

The Center for Educational Effectiveness, a contractor to OSPI, reported on the current situation with regard to 353 schools that were identified as needing improvement for not meeting AYP targets. Compared to the state, these identified schools had higher ethnic minority populations, higher poverty, and higher percentages of English Language Learners (ELL). The highest percentage of schools, 47 percent, did not meet AYP targets because of math only; 1 percent reading only; 10 percent math and reading; 7 percent special education or ELL only; and the remaining 35 percent for multiple reasons.

Baker Evaluation, Research and Consulting, Inc. (BERC), another contractor to OSPI, reported on high schools' college and career readiness. The main focus of the presentation defined "college ready" through three factors: college awareness, college eligibility, and college preparedness. Awareness refers to knowing what courses are required; eligibility is taking the courses that are required to get into the college of one's choice; and preparedness refers to having the knowledge and skills needed to be successful at college-level work without remediation.

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